

SINGLE-PARENT FAMILIES REPORT



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MANITOBA ADVISORY COUNCIL ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

NOVEMBER, 1990

The Manitoba Advisory Council on the Status of Women is an "arms-length" government organization responsible for advising the Manitoba Government on matters of concern to women. The objective of the Advisory Council is to advance the goal of equal participation of women in society and to promote changes in social, legal and economic structures to that end.

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INTRODUCTION

Behind the anonymous statistics on poverty is a new reality. In Canada, the poorest of the poor are single-parent families led by women. Female-led families experience a distinct disadvantage in Canadian society. The harsh reality of women's secondary place in the economy is known to almost all female-headed single-parent families, and grinding, unremitting poverty is a fact of life for many of them.

While change in family structure has been rapid during the past two decades, societal attitudes and awareness about the extent and impact of this particular change have not altered significantly. The single-parent family is stereotyped in a negative manner and is not afforded adequate social support. In most cases, the words used to describe this family structure are either negative or inaccurate. For example, this report will use the term "single-parent family" as it is the most commonly used terminology. The use of this gender neutral term, however, hides the fact that the vast majority of single-parent families are mother-led -- women living alone with their children. This study will explore some of the realities of living in a single-parent family, particularly those that are headed by women.

The number of single-parent families in Canada has increased sharply over the past twenty years, dramatically changing the nature of family life for many Canadians. Today, more than 12% of all Canadian families are led by a single-parent.¹

One goal of this report is to develop a statistical profile of the economic realities of single-parent families in Canada and in Manitoba. Here, a word of caution is in order, for the exercise of creating such a profile runs the risk of reducing the population under study to a few common characteristics. In the case of single-parent families, this process can pose a particular danger. Single-parent families have long been stigmatized, viewed as unhealthy, problematic and incomplete. The increasing association between female-headed single-

parent families and poverty, an association which is clearly made in this report, may act to reinforce this negative stereotype. Readers must be reminded not to associate "poor" with "bad", but to recognize and understand the social, economic and political factors which interact to maintain many single-parent families in low-income situations.

Recently a number of qualitative studies have been completed, in which researchers talked to women who are living alone with their children. These studies have noted a high incidence of poverty and its impact on these families, but they have also captured the remarkable strength and positive attitudes of many women and children living together in families that are healthy and complete within themselves.² Single-parent families are challenging our society to respect this family composition and to change social conditions that are for them exclusionary, punitive and disrespectful.

Although qualitative studies of single-parent families are very important, few studies have looked specifically at the economic circumstances of single-parent families, with a view to making concrete recommendations for change. It is primarily for this reason that the Advisory Council has prepared this report.

In Part I of the report, a statistical profile of single-parent families is presented. This is followed in Part II by a review of provincial government programs and services which have an impact on the quality of life for single-parent families, especially those headed by women. Part III of the report contains recommendations to the Manitoba Government which are designed to ensure that single-parent families are able to enjoy a decent standard of living and to participate fully in community life.

I. A PROFILE OF SINGLE-PARENT FAMILIES IN CANADA

In 1986, there were 6,734,980 families in Canada. Of these families, 853,640, or 12.7%, were single-parent families.¹ Of all single-parent families in 1986, 701,900 families, or almost 83% of these families, were female-headed (see Table 1 below). This distribution of more than 80% female-led single-parent families reflects a pattern that has been consistent over time.

TABLE 1
SINGLE-PARENT FAMILIES IN CANADA

	<u>1976</u>		<u>1986</u>	
	#	%	#	%
Female-headed	464,340	83.0	701,900	82.2
Male-headed	94,990	17.0	151,740	17.7
TOTAL	559,330	100.0	853,640	100.0
Percentage Change 1976-1986:				+ 52.6

Sources: 1976 *1976 Census of Canada, Families: Characteristics of Parents in Lone-Parent Families*, CS93-825, Minister of Supply and Services, 1978, Table 25, p. 25-1.

 1986 *Canada 1986, Census Divisions and Sub-Divisions Manitoba, Part 1*, CS94-113, Statistics Canada p. 3 and p. 64.

From 1966 to 1986, single-parent families in Canada increased by 130%; their numbers rising from 371,885 to 853,640. During this same period, husband-wife families increased by only 42%.²

In the early 1960s, approximately 6% of all children in Canada were members of single-parent families. By 1986, this percentage had increased to more than 14%, when 1.2 million children were living in single-parent families.³

The following statistical profile will present several characteristics of single-parent families.

Female-headed single-parent families will be the primary focus of the profile, as their numbers are much larger than those of their male counterparts, and their income needs more severe.

i) Single-Parent Families and Poverty

There is no official measure of poverty in Canada. In this report, the Statistics Canada measure is used. Through an annual survey, Statistics Canada defines a set of income cut-offs below which people may be said to live in poverty (see Table II below).

TABLE II
STATISTICS CANADA LOW-INCOME CUT-OFFS, 1989

Size of household	Size of area of residence				
	500,000 +	100,000-499,999	30,000-99,999	Less than 30,000	Rural areas
1 person	13,414 (12,063)	11,788 (11,457)	11,511 (10,748)	10,493 (9,936)	9,135 (8,921)
2 persons	18,192 (15,916)	15,968 (15,106)	15,602 (14,094)	14,228 (13,076)	12,382 (11,659)
3 persons	23,122 (21,291)	20,297 (20,176)	19,837 (18,856)	18,084 (17,540)	15,737 (15,612)
4 persons	26,619 (24,534)	23,386 (23,317)	22,842 (21,797)	20,823 (20,275)	18,121 (18,048)
5 persons	29,069 (28,589)	25,554 (27,070)	24,941 (25,200)	22,745 (23,530)	19,790 (20,987)
6 persons	31,568 (31,225)	27,732 (29,501)	27,081 (27,576)	24,699 (25,648)	21,491 (22,912)
7 or more	33,956 (34,368)	29,809 (32,543)	29,137 (30,415)	26,560 (28,285)	23,124 (25,244)

Source: Statistics Canada, *Income Distributions by Size in Canada*, 1987, Cat. No. 13-207, pp. 34 and 174. The authors have estimated the 1989 cut-offs by adjusting Statistics Canada's figures for an expected inflation rate of 8.5 per cent over the two-year period 1988-1989. The figures in parentheses represent the 1978 base; the other figures use the up-dated 1986 base.

A most serious and alarming characteristic associated with female-headed single-parent families is a vulnerability to poverty. Over one-half, or some 56% of single-parent families headed by women, are poor.⁴ In recent years, female single-parents have overtaken elderly women as the poorest segment of the Canadian population. The growing "feminization" of poverty is a matter of great concern. Many women turn to social assistance because of the lack of real alternatives available to them.

One in three female single-parents relies on social assistance as the primary source of income for her family.⁵ In 1986, the estimated social assistance income for a single-parent family with one child ranged from 59% to 84% of the Statistics Canada low income cut-offs, depending on province of residence. For those single-parent families living in Manitoba in 1986, social assistance income was 63.5% of the poverty line.⁶

Female-headed single-parent families who live in poverty are often very poor. In the case of poor households led by single-parent women in 1986, these families had incomes that averaged \$6,400 below the poverty line.⁷

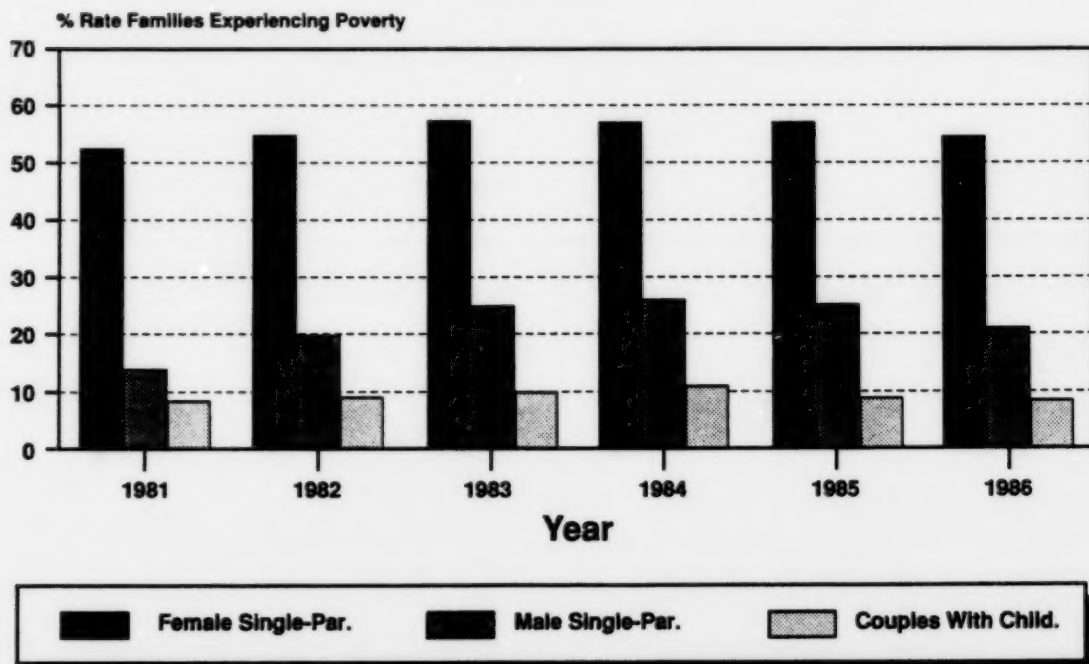
Recent studies of poverty in Canada highlight the increasing incidence of poverty among female-headed single-parent families.⁸ The human face of poverty is changing, according to David Ross and Richard Shillington, authors of the *Canadian Fact Book on Poverty*, 1989: "(a)mong poor families there has been a dramatic shift toward younger families, especially sole-support mothers".⁹

The Poverty Profile 1988, a report of the National Council of Welfare, focused on poverty among children. Of the one million children in Canada living in poverty in 1986, more than one-third (361,000) lived in female-headed single-parent families.¹⁰ Canada has the second highest rate of child poverty among industrialized countries.¹¹ As long as women continue to have a second-class status within the economy, many children will be denied opportunities for healthy nutrition, safe housing, quality education and a positive view of the future.

Comparisons between single-parent families headed by women, those headed by men, and two-parent families, reveal striking differences, particularly with reference to income levels and financial hardship. In 1986, single-parent families headed by women represented 41.8% of all Canadian families with children who had incomes below the poverty line, while male-led single-parent families made up only 2.9% of this group.¹²

The average income for a female-headed single-parent family in 1986 was \$17,353, or less than 40% of the average income for a two-parent family (\$44,919).¹³ Graph A below depicts the trends in poverty for Canadian families, comparing female single-parents, male single-parents and couples with children. During the six year time span shown, from 1981 to 1986, the poverty rate for female-headed single-parent families was far greater than that for male-led single-parent families, or for husband-wife families.

GRAPH A
TRENDS IN PROVERTY: FAMILIES
1981 - 1986



Source: *Poverty Profile, 1988*: National Council of Welfare, Ken Battle, Minister of Supply and Services, Canada, 1988.

* Family head under age 65 children under age 18.

Shelter costs in relation to income provide another measure of the financial hardship experienced by female-headed single-parent families. In 1986, 72% of female-headed single-parent families rented their living accommodations, compared to only 27% of other families.¹⁴ Of all female-headed single-parent families who lived in rented dwellings, 60% (333,710) paid more than 30% of their family income for rent, a proportion established by the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation as a measure of rental affordability. This was true for only 32.7% (39,575) of male-headed single-parent families, and 22.3% (665,275) of husband-wife families with children at home.¹⁵

Living conditions for families are strongly tied to level of family income. Access to housing, child care, developmental opportunities for children, education and training opportunities, material rewards and social networks are influenced by the availability of financial resources.

Household surveys which compare female single-parent households with other families indicate that many female-headed single-parent families experience material disadvantages, as well as related social and emotional stress. Studies have found, for example, that single-parent families headed by women are less likely than other families with children to have appliances such as freezers, dishwashers and clothes dryers.¹⁶ A lack of such appliances increases the manual workload as well as the costs and personal stress associated with food preparation, domestic cleaning and laundry.

Fewer single-parent families have cars. A 1984 survey found that 55% of female-headed single-parent families had an automobile, compared to 86% of other families with children.¹⁷ Limited access to transportation reinforces a sense of physical isolation and loneliness, and creates barriers to the utilization of a range of social services and other resources.

Ross and Shillington note that significant social risks tend to confront poor families. They highlight two such risks, including the elevated school drop-out rate among children from poor families, which is 2.2 times the rate among children from non-poor families. They also note the disproportionate number of poor children in the care of the child welfare system.

In 1986, between 54 and 75% of the 49,000 children in care were from lower income families.¹⁸ These risks, which are so costly to society and to future generations, must be borne in mind when programs and services are being developed for single-parent families.

ii) Single-Parent Families and Marital Status

In recent years, divorce and separation have overtaken widowhood as the most common circumstance resulting in single-parenthood. As Table III shows, in 1961, 63% of all female single-parents were widowed; a frequency which had dropped to 28% by 1986. In 1961, 35% of female single-parents were separated or divorced, compared to 57% in 1986.

Women who were single-parents, and who had never married, accounted for only 2% of all female single-parents in 1961. This situation is changing as well; with the percentage of never married female single-parents increasing to 15% by 1986.

TABLE III
FEMALE SINGLE-PARENT FAMILIES 1961 AND 1986
DISTRIBUTION BY MARITAL STATUS

	<u>1961</u> (%)	<u>1986</u> (%)
Widowed	63.0	28.0
Separated & Divorced	35.0	57.0
Never Married	2.0	15.0

Source: Statistics Canada, *Canadian Social Trends*, Spring 1989, p. 28

iii) Single-Parent Families and Age

The age of single-parents is one variable that differs significantly for women and men.

Table IV shows the relative distributions of single-parents by age and sex in 1986.

TABLE IV
SINGLE-PARENTS BY AGE AND SEX, 1986

<u>AGE GROUP</u>	<u>FEMALE</u>			<u>MALE</u>		
	Number	% Total Single-parent families in age group	% Total Female-headed single-parent families	Number	% Total Single-parent families in age group	% Total Male-headed single-parent families
Under 25	49,670	94	7.1	3,005	6	2.0
25-44	363,950	85	51.9	63,050	15	41.5
45-64	209,570	76	29.9	65,890	24	43.4
65 and over	78,715	80	11.2	19,800	20	13.0

Sources: Statistics Canada, *Canadian Social Trends*, Winter 1987 p. 32
Canada Year Book, 1988, Minister of Supply and Services, Ottawa, 1987 table 2.21, p. 2-22.

In the 15-24 year age group, an overwhelming number of single-parents are women. In 1986, there were almost 50,000 female-headed single-parent families in Canada with household-heads under age 25 years, compared to only 3,000 such families led by men.

More than one-half of all female heads of single-parent families are located in the 25-44 year age group. In contrast, male heads of single-parent families are concentrated in the 25-44 and 45-64 year age brackets.

Because of a positive relationship between income level and age, these differences by sex are significant. In Canada, as age increases, up to the point of retirement, average income levels also increase. This trend puts male single-parents, who generally are older, into higher income brackets than most female single-parents (see also the discussion on p. 10 regarding wage differentials between female and male single-parents).

iv) Single-Parent Families and Family Size

Approximately 60% of all single-parent families are made up of a parent living with just one child (see Table V). Nearly one-third of single-parent families have two children living at home. This distribution is similar for female- and male-led single-parent families.

TABLE V
SINGLE-PARENT FAMILIES:
DISTRIBUTION BY NUMBER OF CHILDREN AT HOME,
CANADA, 1986

	Female-headed		Male-headed	
	#	%	#	%
	701,900		151,740	
-1 child at home	398,005	57.0	91,020	60.0
-2 children	213,945	30.0	42,155	28.0
-3 or more	89,955	13.0	18,560	12.0

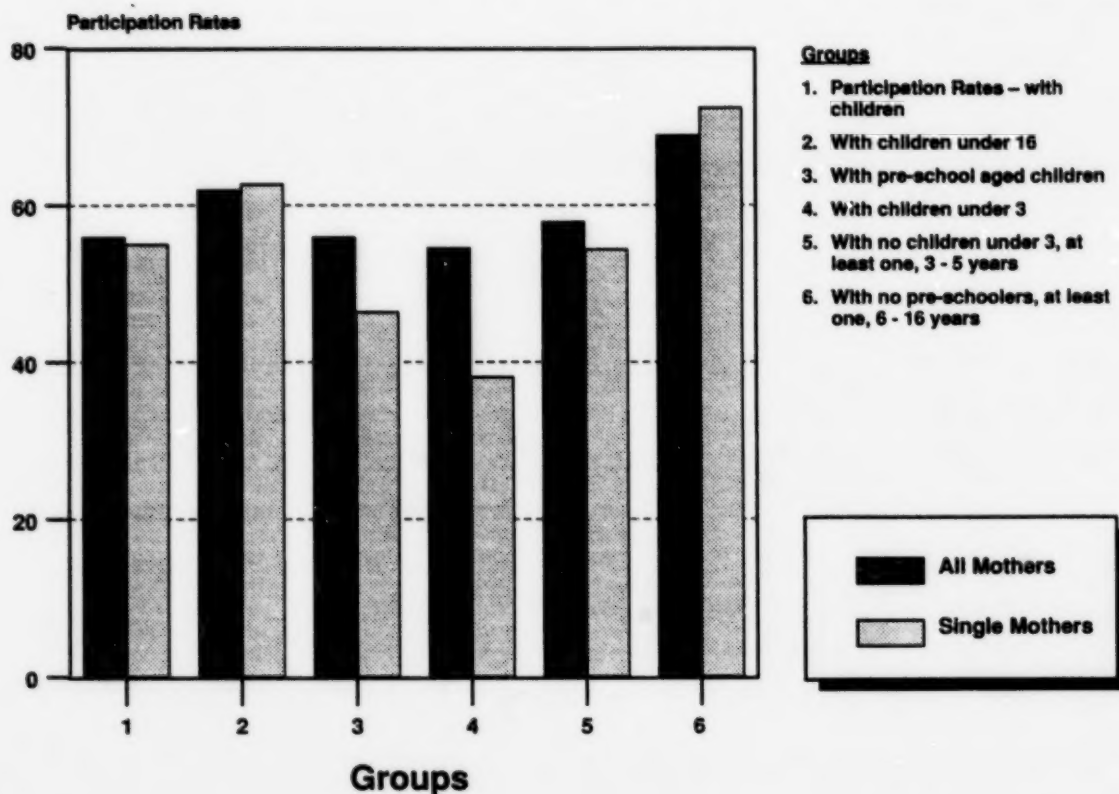
Source: *Canada 1986, Census Divisions and Sub-Divisions, Manitoba, part 1, CS94-113, Statistics Canada p.3.*

v) Single-Parent Families and Labour Force Activity

Labour Force Survey data for 1986 show that single-parent mothers participated in the labour force at the same rate as all women who were mothers.¹⁹ The participation rate for single-parent mothers was 55.4% in 1986, compared to 55.8% for all mothers.

Graph B displays participation rates by age of children for single-parent mothers and for all mothers. Significant differences in these rates appear when the age of children is considered. The participation of single-parent mothers in the labour force decreases when there are pre-schoolers in the home, and particularly when one or more children are under three years of age. When children are older, the participation rates between single-parent mothers and all mothers again correspond fairly equally.

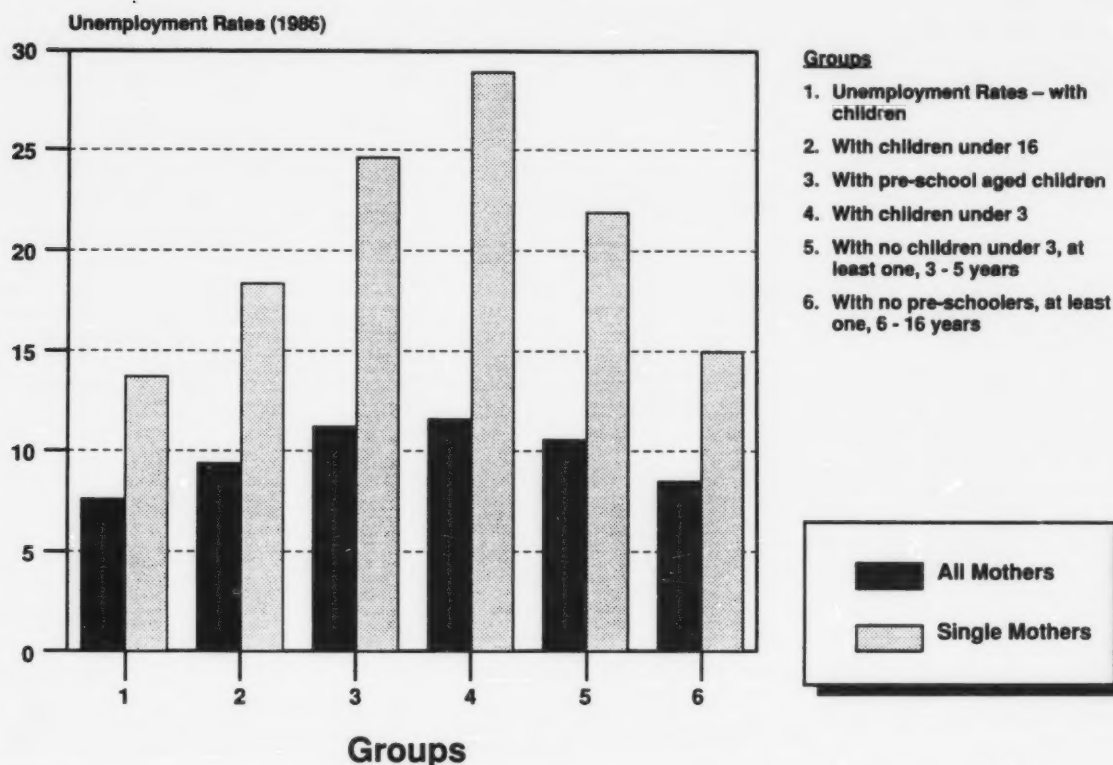
GRAPH B
LABOUR FORCE ACTIVITY: ALL MOTHERS AND
FEMALE SINGLE-PARENT MOTHERS



Source: *The Labour Force*: Statistics Canada, Cat. 71-001, May 1986, Table 10A, p. 36.

As shown in Graph C, unemployment rates for single-parent mothers are much higher than those for all mothers; ranging from a low of 13.9% to a high of 29.1% when there is a child under three years in the home. The range for all mothers is 8% to 12.1%. Given that the highest levels of unemployment for single-parent mothers coincide with the time when their children are in the youngest age bracket, it seems reasonable to suggest that single parents may experience more serious problems with child care and flexibility of work hours, and possible employer bias.

GRAPH C
LABOUR FORCE ACTIVITY: ALL MOTHERS AND
FEMALE SINGLE-PARENT MOTHERS



Source: *The Labour Force*: Statistics Canada, Cat. 71-001, May 1986, Table 10A, p. 36.

Wage differentials between men and women in the work force have been well documented, and are well known. In 1986, for example, average earnings for all full-time female workers were \$19,874, or 65.9% of the earnings of male full-time workers (\$30,131).²⁰ This wage differential was even more pronounced for single-parents: the average employment income for female single-parents in 1986 was \$12,676, or 46.8% of the average employment income for male single-parents (\$27,060).²¹ Single-parent mothers are more likely to work at or below the minimum wage than men of the same status. In 1986, approximately 9% of single-parent mothers were paid at \$4.00 or less per hour, compared with only a handful of their male counterparts.²²

vi) Single-Parent Families, Divorce and Child Custody

Divorce merits special consideration in a review of female-headed single-parent families. Although divorce is not common to all single-parent families, marital breakdown has become the leading circumstance resulting in single parenthood.

In 1965, there were 8,974 divorces in Canada. Twenty years later, in 1985, 61,908 divorces were recorded, clearly demonstrating a dramatic increase in the incidence of divorce.²³ Divorce rates continue to climb rapidly, with 86,985 divorces occurring in 1987.²⁴

A common perception prevails that child custody is being granted jointly to both parents, or that custody is being granted to fathers alone, more frequently than in the past. In reviewing custody grants between 1971 and 1985, however, Margrit Eichler found that the distribution of these grants remained remarkably stable, with no increase in the proportion of fathers receiving custody.²⁵ In 1986, the most recent year for which figures are available, women received custody of children in 75% of cases, fathers received custody in 12% of cases, and joint custody was granted in only 11% of cases.²⁶

Although data does not yet support a trend towards joint custody arrangements, such arrangements do appear to be increasingly popular in family dissolution cases. Much concern is therefore being expressed about the effect of joint custody on child maintenance payments.²⁷ When joint custody is granted, the court does not necessarily define actual physical custody of the children involved, nor degree of financial support provided. In many such situations, mothers are continuing to be the primary care-givers and "residential parents". At the same time, trends in court decisions have been towards lowering the amount of child support provided to the residential parent, based on a supposed cost-sharing advantage occurring to this parent.²⁸ For this and other reasons, it will be important to monitor the developments and issues that arise in relation to child custody and child support payments.

SINGLE-PARENT FAMILIES IN MANITOBA

The profile of the single-parent family in Manitoba mirrors that of the single-parent family in Canada. In 1986, the 33,800 single-parent families in Manitoba represented 12.2% of all families in the province (see Table I in Appendix I). Of these families, 27,960, or 82.7% were female-headed, while only 5,840 were led by men (17.2%). Almost 16% of all children in Manitoba lived with one parent in 1986.²⁹

The number of single-parent families in Manitoba is likely to continue to increase. In 1987, there were 3,771 divorces; a 29.3% increase over the 2,917 divorces recorded in 1986.³⁰

As is the case across the country, poverty strikes most severely at single-parent families led by women. *The Canadian Fact Book on Poverty, 1989* noted that 57.9% of female-headed single-parent families in Manitoba had incomes below the poverty line.³¹ In many cases, their incomes are much lower than officially recognized low income cut-offs.

The Reality Gap, a report for the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women, supplied the following example of this "gap" as experienced by single-parents in Manitoba receiving provincial social assistance payments.³²

Welfare Income: Single-Parent Family, One Child (Two Years Old) (1986)

<i>Social Allowance</i>	<i>Family Allowance</i>	<i>Child Tax Credit</i>	<i>Provincial Tax Credit</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Poverty Line</i>	<i>Gap</i>
\$7,111	379	684	751	8,925	14,055	5,180

The total income available to the family in this instance was only 63.5% of the amount Statistics Canada proposed as the minimum poverty line for a two-person family.

Nearly one-third of all female-headed single-parent families in Manitoba depend on social assistance as their primary source of income. In 1986, more than 8,400 female-headed single-parent families survived on income levels of approximately two-thirds of the minimum poverty line.³³

Relative to other families in Manitoba, female-headed single-parent families fare very poorly in the areas of income and resources. In 1986, the average income for female-headed single-parent families in Manitoba was \$19,753, compared to \$30,190 for male-led single-parent families, and \$41,557 for husband-wife families with children.³⁴

Of all female-headed single-parent families who lived in rented dwellings in 1986, 62% paid more than 30% of total family income for rent, compared to 29% of male-led single-parent families. The same was true for only 21.8% of husband-wife families.³⁵

In May 1989, the Social Planning Council of Winnipeg released *Winnipeg Census Data: Insights and Trends*, a study comparing census data from 1981 to 1986. This report shows that many of the characteristics of single-parent families in Winnipeg are similar to those of single-parent families in Manitoba and in Canada. In 1986, over 84% of the 22,505 single-parents in Winnipeg were women (see Table 1 in Appendix 1).

One trend in the Social Planning Council report which should be highlighted is the rapidly increasing number of aboriginal single-parent families. While all single-parent families in Winnipeg increased by 17.6% between 1981 and 1986, aboriginal single-parent families increased by 58%; their numbers rising from 1,575 families in 1981 to 2,485 families in 1986.³⁶ The proportion of those aged 15+ aboriginal population which is single-parents is now three times that of the general population.³⁷ This growth is due in part to the steady migration of aboriginal people to urban centres.

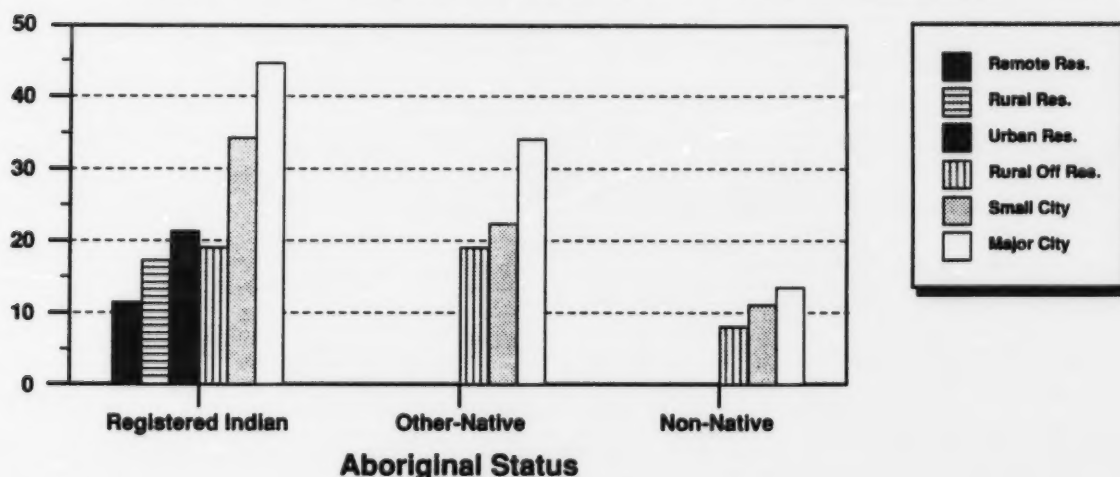
In his study, *The Overlooked of the Neglected: Native Single Mothers in Major Cities on the Prairies*, Patrick Falconer presents a descriptive analysis of urban aboriginal families. He

concur that a major demographic shift has occurred with an increasing number of aboriginal single-parent families concentrated in large urban centres. Furthermore, these families are younger, are more likely to be headed by women and are often poor. Clearly, the traditional role and composition of the aboriginal family has been lost in transit from rural community to urban setting. Most urban aboriginal families are woman-led and poor.³⁸

Graph D displays the percentage distribution of families with children by aboriginal status and urban proximity. What became apparent is that there are twice as many aboriginal single-parent families as non-aboriginal. Falconer argues that the unique situation of the urban aboriginal family warrants major public policy and program initiatives by all three levels of government.³⁹

The most predominant features common to single-parent families, whether they live in Winnipeg, Manitoba or Canada, are that they are female-headed, and many are poor. As such a high and growing proportion of women and their children are experiencing the severe economic and social stresses associated with poverty, it is imperative that we as a society understand changing family structures and respond appropriately to address the concerns of those in greatest need.

GRAPH D
SINGLE-PARENT FAMILIES AS A PERCENTAGE OF ALL FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN BY
ABORIGINAL STATUS AND URBAN PROXIMITY, PRAIRIE PROVINCES, 1981



II. AN OVERVIEW OF PROGRAMS AND SERVICES AVAILABLE TO SINGLE-PARENT FAMILIES IN MANITOBA

Although there is diversity with respect to the characteristics of single-parent families, it is important to recognize that the basic needs of these families are needs which are common to all families. Because of the severe financial hardship experienced by many single-parent families, the government programs and services used most frequently by them are those which have been designed specifically for low-income individuals and families. Several government departments such as Family Services, Housing and Education and Training, provide these services, as do some private and semi-private agencies, for example, regional Child and Family Services agencies, Family Services of Winnipeg, and the Children's Home of Winnipeg.

In March 1989, the Women's Initiative, a task force established to consult with women in Manitoba, published an inventory of provincial government programs and services available to women. The Women's Initiative Consulting Committee found that thirteen government departments were involved in the delivery of thirty-nine different programs which have an impact on women.¹ In most cases, the services were found to be generic in nature, such as housing subsidies and income supplements. When participation rates were examined by gender, however, many programs reported high levels of female participation. This is important in the context of this report because the vast majority of single-parents are women.

The inventory published by the Women's Initiative identified programs for adolescent parents and the Single Parent Job Access Program as the only interventions specifically addressing the needs of single-parents.

While it appears that programs for the general population can be used to address the needs of single-parent families, it is important to review these programs to ensure that they are, indeed, meeting these needs.

GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES IN MANITOBA

Given the particular types of need that arise due to the characteristics of single-parent families, this part of the report will focus on program and service provisions of several provincial government departments which address need in the areas of income, shelter, child care, spousal maintenance and child support, and education and training.²

I. INCOME SECURITY: A DESCRIPTION

Income security programs are designed to assist individuals in need by providing them with basic financial assistance, or income supplements. In Manitoba, those income security programs which provide basic financial assistance, and are also known as income maintenance programs, include: the Social Allowances Program, the Work Incentive Program, and the Human Resources Opportunity Program.

Of the two Manitoba income supplement programs, Child Related Income Supplement Program and 55 plus, only the former is relevant to this review.

A. INCOME MAINTENANCE: SOCIAL ALLOWANCES PROGRAM

The Social Allowances Program is a provincial income security program "designed to ensure that no person residing in Manitoba lacks the basic necessities essential to their health and well-being".³ Assistance is provided to persons in need who are eligible for benefits under the Social Allowances Act. Recipients must apply for benefits and are required to demonstrate financial need.

Sole-support parents who have dependent children, and who are widowed, divorced, never married, separated, or who have spouses in prison, are eligible for assistance under the Sole Support Parent category of the Social Allowances Program. In 1987-88, there were 9,044

cases in the Sole Support Parent category, representing almost 40% of all Social Allowances cases (23,285).⁴ Women head approximately 95% of families in the Sole Support Parent category.⁵ More than 60% of these families reside in Winnipeg.⁶

Provisions under all categories of the Social Allowances Program include a basic financial allowance, a shelter subsidy, as well as access to health-related supplies and services. An annual allotment of \$150 is available for "special needs", which may include bedding, cookware and moving expenses.

Up until January 1990, an initial application for benefits had to be made at the municipal level, and after a three month period of receiving benefits, a second application was required to have the case transferred to the provincial program. As of January 1990, single-parents are eligible to apply directly to the provincial Social Allowances Program. This change in social assistance policy is in direct response to recommendations made by the Women's Initiative.

Social allowances recipients are expected to comply with numerous regulations in order to maintain their eligibility status. Recipients are to report immediately to their assigned economic security counsellor all circumstances which may change their eligibility. Counsellors may make regular home visits. Recipients are allowed earning exemptions of \$50.00 per month. Yearly review forms must be completed to confirm continued eligibility.

Individuals accepted by an approved educational institution for a full-time course of study are also eligible to receive social allowances benefits.

1) Social Allowances: Work Incentive Program

The Work Incentive Program is designed to increase employment incentives for long-term social allowances recipients.⁷ Those enrolled in this program are allowed to keep a portion

of their earnings representing the greater of:

- \$50.00 per month
- \$.70 for each hour worked
- 30% of gross monthly earnings.

Exemptions are allowed for most compulsory payroll deductions and necessary work expenses such as those associated with the costs of transportation, clothing, equipment and child care provided by non-relatives. The remainder of the earned income is applied to the recipient's budget, and the amount of social allowances granted is reduced dollar for dollar.⁸

Approximately 12% of all social allowances recipients utilize the Work Incentive Program.⁹

ii) Human Resources Opportunity Program

The Human Resources Opportunity Program is intended to assist those individuals, who experience continued difficulty in finding and maintaining employment, to enter or re-enter the work force. Specific attention is given to persons receiving, or likely to receive, social assistance.¹⁰

Participants in the Human Resources Opportunity Program pursue training in technical or vocational courses, as well as social-skills development. Work experience in regular work settings is a major program component.

Seven Human Resources Opportunity Centres have been set up within Manitoba for persons who require a more intensive, hands-on approach to counselling and job training.¹¹ These Centres are in Winnipeg, Brandon, Gimli, Dauphin, The Pas, Beausejour and Portage la Prairie.

In 1987-88, the Human Resources Opportunity Centres served 1,298 clients, 53% of whom

were women.¹²

The Single Parent Job Access Program (SPJAP), the only provincial government initiative designed specifically to meet the needs of single-parents, is a component of the Human Resources Opportunity Program, funded jointly under the Canada/Manitoba Agreement on Employability Enhancement of Social Assistance Recipients.¹³ Beginning as a pilot project in 1986-87 in both Winnipeg and in Brandon, SPJAP expanded to all seven Human Resources Opportunity Centres in 1987-88.

Those who take part in the SPJAP may be placed in a pre-employment group program, during which time they remain in receipt of social assistance and receive an incentive allowance. Later, when in the skills-training or work-experience program, participants receive minimum wage. Throughout the program, the costs of child care and initial work-related expenses are covered. Upon completion of programming, participants are assisted to enter regular employment, or to pursue further skills training at a community college or university.¹⁴

The added work-related resources such as child care costs and the "bridging" efforts helping clients attain either work or additional training, are seen as very important and necessary program components for single-parents.

In 1987-88, 632 people took part in the SPJAP. Ninety-nine percent of the participants were women.¹⁵

B. INCOME SUPPLEMENT

i) Child Related Income Support Program

The Child Related Income Support Program (CRISP) is a provincial income supplement program providing monthly benefits to low-income Manitoba families to assist them with the

costs of raising children.¹⁶

Income eligibility for CRISP is based on total family income as well as the number of children in a family. The maximum benefit payable is \$30.00 per child per month. For example, during the 1989-90 program year, a three child family whose gross annual income is below \$15,373 will be eligible for maximum benefits of \$1,080 (3 x \$30 x 12 mos.). The same sized families with incomes of up to \$19,969 will be eligible for partial benefits. CRISP recipients must apply annually.¹⁷

In 1987-88, CRISP benefits were provided to an average of 8,058 families per month. Half of these families were headed by single-parents, and over 80% were in receipt of full benefits.¹⁸

INCOME SECURITY: ISSUES FOR SINGLE-PARENT FAMILIES

Income security programs are especially important for single-parent families because one-third of these families rely on these programs to meet their basic needs.

In examining issues of income security for single-parent families, the most significant issues are adequacy of program resources and flexibility of program regulations.

Benefits under the Social Allowances Program are far too low to adequately provide for single-parent family needs. As noted earlier, social assistance income for single-parent families is approximately two-thirds of the low income cut-off lines established by Statistics Canada.

Studies have shown that shelter subsidies provided to provincial social assistance recipients do not match the real costs of rental accommodations, forcing recipients to "borrow" from personal allowances and food money.¹⁹ For example, in 1987, the Department of Employment Services and Economic Security (now the Department of Family Services) reviewed 2,427 Social Allowances case files in Winnipeg, and found that 66.8% of recipients were paying rents which exceeded shelter subsidy guidelines.²⁰ The gap between shelter subsidies and actual rental costs puts added stress on single-parent families with already meagre means of support.

Incentive programs, meant to encourage employment among social allowances recipients, often pose disincentives for single-parents and others who might otherwise engage in the paid labour force. Incentives themselves are very meagre, being the greater of \$50 per month, \$.70 for each hour worked, or 30% of gross monthly earnings. When the true costs associated with employment are factored in and added to lost social assistance benefits, the purpose of incentive programs is seriously undermined.

Income supplement programs, generally designed for the "working poor", are extremely limited in their scope, thus excluding many families in need. The CRISP program, for example, uses maximum income cut-off lines which are below the low income cut-offs set annually by Statistics Canada. The adequacy of this program must be questioned when families living at the poverty line, or just below it, are deemed ineligible for benefits.

Single-parents and others on social assistance must deal not only with the reality of inadequate program resources, but also with the consequences of inflexible program regulations. Existing regulations in Manitoba's Social Allowances Act, for example, jeopardize the notion of choice for single-parents. One such regulation stipulates that in order to remain eligible for social allowances, recipients must accept any reasonable job offer, or vocational training opportunity, deemed necessary by their economic security counsellor to improve or restore their capacity to become self supporting. Directives like these threaten a single-parent who may wish to be a full-time homemaker.

Another example of program inflexibility is the exclusion in the Social Allowances Program of self-employment as a means of achieving economic independence. To remain eligible for benefits, social allowances recipients cannot accumulate liquid assets beyond \$2,000 per family, or \$400 per person. Also, self-employment is specifically excluded as a source of earned income in the Work Incentive Program. This exclusion of self-employment as a means of economic independence is problematic in view of the fact that self-employment has become a significant factor in the creation of new jobs in Canada. Indeed, statistics show that growth in the self-employed category of workers is twice as rapid as growth in the paid workers group.²¹ The number of self-employed women in particular is growing steadily, and at a faster pace than the number of self-employed men.²²

II. SHELTER PROGRAMS: A DESCRIPTION

Shelter programs are designed to assist individuals in need in obtaining living accommodations of reasonable standards.

There are a number of shelter programs currently operating in Manitoba. This review will focus on public housing and the Shelter Allowances for Family Renters program, for these are the primary shelter programs in Manitoba, and they are those which are used most frequently by single-parent families.

A. PUBLIC HOUSING

In 1988, there were more than 20,000 publicly owned housing units in Manitoba.²³ Approximately 50% of these units were occupied by families; the other half by elderly or infirm persons.²⁴

Public housing offers a subsidized rental agreement, charging residents 25% of their total family income for rental fees. There are waiting lists for most public housing units.

Although figures on single-parents families in public housing are not available through Manitoba Housing, the Women's Initiative Report claims that some 70% of the applicants for public housing units are women, and that the majority of these women head one and two children households, where the children are under 9 years of age.²⁵

B. SHELTER ALLOWANCES FOR FAMILY RENTERS

The Shelter Allowances for Family Renters (SAFFR) program provides direct monthly assistance to eligible families who rent accommodation in the private market. The program provides payments to cover up to 90% of eligible rent costs for that portion of rent which is over 25% of income for lower income families. To qualify, applicants must have

dependent children under 18 years of age living in the household.²⁶ This program increases rental opportunities by offering assistance of up to \$170.00 per month.²⁷

Shelter allowance benefits are not taxable although the benefits received from shelter allowances must be subtracted from the amount of Manitoba Property Tax Credit received.

In 1986-87, 2,071 Manitoba families received SAFFR benefits.²⁸

SHELTER PROGRAMS: ISSUES FOR SINGLE-PARENTS

Concerns regarding public housing are significant for single-parent families, as it is these families who are among those most frequently applying for, and occupying, public housing units.

Waiting lists strongly suggest that the number of publicly-owned housing units in Manitoba is insufficient to meet the needs of low-income Manitobans, including single-parent families.

The designs of many of those housing units which are available do not accommodate the needs of families with children, providing, for example, parking lots instead of play grounds.

The existence of publicly-owned housing units, often built as multi-unit complexes, also serves to segregate, and may stigmatize residents.

Although SAFFR offers a positive model for shelter support by providing some low-income families with a measure of choice regarding their place of residence, this is restricted to the extent that there is an insufficient number of such dwellings currently available in the private rental market. Furthermore, SAFFR, like CRISP, is limited itself in that maximum income cut-offs lines are very low, thereby excluding from the program many low-income

families.

III. CHILD DAY CARE: A DESCRIPTION

In February 1990, there were 626 publicly-funded day care facilities in Manitoba, offering a total of 11,663 child care spaces. An additional 4,236 spaces were available in private day care centres (unfunded) and homes.²⁹ There were 292 licensed, non-profit child care facilities.

The Child Day Care Subsidy program provides parents with financial assistance to pay child care fees. The subsidy amount depends on the number of children in day care as well as total family income. For example, in April 1990, a single-parent family with one pre-school child in care was eligible for the full subsidy with a yearly income not greater than \$13,787, or partial subsidy, until net family income exceeded \$23,374 per year. To be eligible for full or partial subsidy, parents must show a reason for requiring day care service. They can be employed, attending school or university, engaged in a training program or have a medical or special need.³⁰

CHILD DAY CARE: ISSUES FOR SINGLE-PARENTS

Recent federal and provincial task forces on child care have indicated that the number of available licensed child care spaces in Manitoba and elsewhere is woefully inadequate. The severe shortage of day care spaces is felt even more keenly in rural and northern communities.

Not only is the number of available child care spaces inadequate, but so too is the nature and flexibility of existing child care programs. Child care programs should be designed not only for those who work a 9 to 5 job, but also for those who are students, shift workers and farmers whose workload changes seasonally. Occasional care should also be made available

to parents who work in the labour force on a part-time basis, as well to those who work full-time in the home.

There is also a need for child care programs which are culturally appropriate, and which can accommodate the particular needs of children with physical, mental and emotional disabilities.

Existing program gaps and inadequacies create severe child care problems for many single-parents and, in turn, may seriously impede their access to employment and educational opportunities.

IV. SPOUSAL MAINTENANCE AND CHILD SUPPORT ORDERS

Spousal maintenance and child support payments play a very significant role in determining the standard of living of many single-parents and their children. The enforcement of maintenance orders, that is, ensuring that the non-custodial parent makes payments regularly, and at the level awarded, has historically been problematic.

In 1980, Manitoba was the first Canadian province to develop and implement an automatic enforcement program. The Maintenance Enforcement Program provides computerized monitoring, automatic enforcement of payments of maintenance for children, spouses or common-law spouses that are ordered by the court, and free legal representation in court for a person seeking to enforce a maintenance order.³¹

In 1986, 12,262 accounts were handled by the Maintenance Enforcement Program, which collected a total of \$13,901,000 in maintenance payments.³² According to this data, the average annual maintenance payment was \$1,133. In 1987, the number of accounts had increased by 11.8% to 13,709 accounts with annual payments averaging \$1,169.³³

MAINTENANCE AND CHILD SUPPORT: ISSUES FOR SINGLE-PARENTS

In those situations where maintenance awards are made, these payments can improve the income levels of single-parent families substantially. Research studies indicate, however, that the prevailing standard of maintenance awards is very low.

An earlier study conducted by the Manitoba Advisory Council on the Status of Women documented the results of maintenance decisions in Manitoba between 1979 and 1981, and in 1983-1984.³⁴ The study found that after separation and divorce, women and the children in their care experience a much lower economic standard of living compared to husbands and fathers. A study of American divorcing families reached the same conclusion, noting that one immediate consequence of divorce is a significant change in economic conditions for family members. According to this study: "... after divorce, women and the minor children in their households experienced a 73% decline in their standard of living, while former husbands experienced a 42% rise in their standard of living."³⁵

In addition to inadequate maintenance awards, a second issue raised in the Advisory Council study was the definition, or lack thereof, in the Manitoba Family Maintenance Act, of "financial independence". The Act provides that where one spouse is financially dependent on the other, the court, in determining a reasonable amount of maintenance, must consider the extent to which the dependent spouse is taking reasonable steps to become financially independent. Cases reviewed in the Advisory Council study demonstrate that courts grant little or no maintenance in a range of cases, including those in which long-term homemakers have managed to find only minimum wage jobs.

V. EDUCATION AND TRAINING PROGRAMS

Although many educational programs and institutions in Manitoba are government-

sponsored, this report will focus only on those which provide financial, social and/or academic supports to students.

A. POST-SECONDARY ADULT CONTINUING EDUCATION (PACE)

Through the Department of Education and Training, adults in Manitoba are offered a wide range of educational and training opportunities. The Post-Secondary Adult Continuing Education (PACE) Division of Manitoba Education and Training provides services for more than 98,000 students.³⁶ Gender balance in programs varies by discipline and by geographical area. The program inventory completed by the Women's Initiative noted that "(i)n only a few cases are courses and subjects delivered exclusively and specifically for women".³⁷ Several programs have been designed specifically to meet the needs of single-parents.

PACE currently offers services to people in Manitoba through numerous educational institutions, as well as through distance education strategies. This division is also responsible for other provincially funded initiatives such as the Winnipeg Core Area Initiative Employment and Training Program, New Careers and Adult ESL.

B. ACCESS PROGRAMS: POST-SECONDARY CAREER DEVELOPMENT BRANCH

ACCESS programs are affirmative education initiatives aimed at "priority" populations, including women, disabled people, aboriginal people, and visible minorities, who have historically been under-represented in institutions of higher learning. These programs offer personal, financial and academic supports.³⁸

The ACCESS programs are recognized as innovative, successful, educational programs in Manitoba. They demonstrate an effective educational formula based on the integrated student support system and act as educational models within the province. The ACCESS programs have a long history of attracting, retaining and graduating aboriginal, immigrant and low-income students.³⁹

Sixteen ACCESS programs are currently operating in Manitoba. These programs include University of Manitoba ACCESS Programs, North and South, Special Pre-Medical Studies Program, Professional Health Program, Northern Bachelor of Social Work Program, Brandon University Northern Teacher Education Program, Community College ACCESS Programs, North and South, Winnipeg Education Centre: Bachelor of Education and Bachelor of Social Work, Nursing Programs, North and South, Engineering ACCESS Program, ACCESS North (Electrical/Electronics), ACCESS North Thompson Region (Civil Technology), and ACCESS North The Pas region.⁴⁰

Until March 31, 1989, funding for ACCESS programs had been based on a 60-40 federal-provincial cost-sharing program called the Northern Development Agreement. The provincial government has made a one year commitment of \$2.6 million while it continues to negotiate a new arrangement with the federal government.

In the 1989-90 academic year, more than 600 students were enrolled in ACCESS programs, of these, 194 (31%) were single-parents.⁴¹

C. ADOLESCENT PARENTS

As noted previously, a growing segment of female-headed single-parents is comprised of young unmarried women who are keeping their babies, rather than giving them up for adoption. Pregnancy and childbirth often prevent young women from completing their education. Having few job skills and little work experience means that to survive, many of these adolescents are forced to rely on social assistance, or on low-paying jobs.

In Winnipeg, a network of concerned agencies, interest groups and individuals, has developed to ensure that program and service information is available to the primary service providers of adolescent parents, such as social workers, workers at child welfare agencies, health care workers and educators. The Adolescent Parent Inter-Agency Network (A.P.I.N.) circulates a newsletter and holds regular inter-agency meetings.

Until the fall of 1989, the Winnipeg School Division #1 sponsored two special programs for young mothers. Both the Point Douglas High School, and the Program for Parents and Infant Development, provided young mothers with opportunities to continue in an academic program. These two programs were recently amalgamated, bringing the Program for Adolescent Parents and Pregnant Teens into one facility.⁴²

Other school divisions in Winnipeg, including Transcona, River East and Fort Garry, have also implemented programs to assist young mothers in continuing their education. Some social service agencies which have traditionally worked with young pregnant women are now also providing them with education support services. Villa Rosa, a residential program for pregnant women who are single, separated or divorced, now has an academic day program for residents with on-site child care. Lindenvue, also a residential program for single expectant mothers, has a day program as well. The "Moms and Babes" project launched by Mount Carmel Clinic encourages young mothers to attend their neighbourhood school and provides them with child care for their infants. Counselling and support services are also made available to the young women in this project. Resources for Adolescent Parents (RAP), operated by Children's Home of Winnipeg, offers adolescent parents both life-skills training and employment preparation.

Personal support and counselling for young mothers are offered through Manitoba's regional Child and Family Services offices. In Winnipeg, there are several parent-child centres, which operate as informal drop-in centres. In addition to providing emotional support to parents, the Young Parents' Community Centre in central Winnipeg is a licensed day care setting, offering short-term (one to three hours) respite care.

In rural and northern settings, few structured programs are available to adolescent parents. One of the few examples is at the Taylor Collegiate in Thompson where social workers and public health officials work together to deliver a school-based health program. Through this prevention-focused project, young women gain access to medical attention earlier in the pregnancy cycle and as a result, birth weights of their babies are found to be increasing.

In addition, new programs for adolescent mothers are being created on several reserves throughout Manitoba.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING: ISSUES FOR SINGLE-PARENTS

Single-parents frequently experience great difficulty in traditional university and college programs. Often regular programs do not offer flexibility in hours nor do they provide part-time study options that might help the single-parent engage in studies, while maintaining family responsibilities. Child care is often costly and difficult to arrange, particularly for evening classes or for time required outside of classroom hours in study and research.

Tuition fees are costly. While loans, bursaries and grants may be provided by the Student Aid Branch, these amounts tend to be inadequate for family financial support. Loan and bursary conditions requiring full-time study also frequently prevent single-parents from pursuing these potential funding resources.

Educational and training opportunities such as the ACCESS programs that have integrated support components to assist single-parents in their educational endeavours, are rare and have many more applicants than available student seats.

Adolescent mothers who leave the educational system in order to look after their children find it very difficult to return later. Communities need both preventative programming and supportive outreach strategies that are effective in assisting young women to pursue education and training opportunities. At present, preventative programming is very limited; other community resources are sparse. Also, as there is no comprehensive, co-ordinated service for adolescent mothers, many find themselves alone and isolated, struggling daily to provide basic care for their children.

GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES: OTHER ISSUES FOR SINGLE-PARENTS

In addition to issues of program adequacy and flexibility, government initiatives which may be utilized by single-parent families are not well co-ordinated, nor are they accessible to all.

i) Co-ordination

Currently, there is no provincial strategy to co-ordinate programs and services that are available for single-parent families. Single-parents must initiate and undertake on their own much of the search for badly-needed resources. Frequently this search has many frustrating and unexpected paths. This is often compounded by the fact that the need for information and resources comes at a time of personal stress and major family upheaval. The type of information required, particularly with regard to the legal system, tends to be complicated and unfamiliar to most people.

Service providers, too, have no route to complete information regarding available programs. This situation also acts to stymie the pursuit of resources if one encounters a service provider who cannot supply accurate and complete information.

Without some kind of co-ordination, single-parents face multiple "entry points" for service in several government departments. Application forms are often complex, difficult to complete, and in most cases, required annually. Most forms collect the same basic data. A single-parent who is employed full-time in a low-paying position, has little time to complete CRISP, SAFFR and Day Care Subsidy forms. Nor would this same person likely have flexible work hours permitting her to go to the specific government offices and receive assistance in completing forms. For many single-parents, access to badly-needed resources is thus often thwarted.

ii) Access

Limited access to resources is compounded when programs are not offered in all parts of the province. For example, northern and rural Manitobans have very limited access to licensed child care facilities. Single-parents residing in smaller northern and rural communities find it almost impossible to participate in training and educational programs that do not include travel and child care subsidies.

In some cases, program publicity is insufficient. Public information on the CRISP and SAFFR programs, for example, is primarily conveyed through brochures displayed in social service offices. Families who do not utilize social services, but who are eligible for these supplement programs may not be aware of their existence. And, of course, brochures alone are of little assistance to those who are illiterate, and those who cannot speak or read English.

Concerns expressed in the *Final Report of the Women's Initiative* are similar to those noted in the above discussion. The Women's Initiative Consulting Committee outlined several gaps in programs and services and noted that most gaps "were directly attributable to lack of co-ordination among government departments and government funded agencies".⁴³

The Consulting Committee also noted that some gaps could be attributed to "a lack of knowledge on the part of the service provider or users of the range of programs available".⁴⁴

Another serious access problem identified by the Consulting Committee referred to programs which were inaccessible due to language and cultural barriers, low literacy levels or a lack of supports.⁴⁵

These concerns point to the need for change. In order to address the concerns of single-parent families in Manitoba more fully, program and service offerings must be reviewed and revised, integrating the principles of adequacy, flexibility, co-ordination and access.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE GOVERNMENT OF MANITOBA REGARDING SINGLE-PARENT FAMILIES

The needs of single-parent families are diverse, and, due to high poverty levels, severe. Therefore, it is imperative that the Government of Manitoba act now to initiate a comprehensive response to address immediate concerns, and stem any further erosion of the status and well-being of single-parent families in Manitoba.

The Manitoba Advisory Council on the Status of Women recommends that the Government of Manitoba take action to address the needs of single-parent families in four essential areas:

- 1) strengthen income security and related programs;
- 2) implement a strategy to coordinate program and service access for single-parent families specifically; and
- 3) work together with other key social institutions to foster a positive attitude toward single-parent families, and to increase awareness of the realities of their lives; and
- 4) develop and expand Native-controlled social service agencies.

Recommendations

It has been shown that a majority of single-parent families in Manitoba are headed by women, and that many live in poverty. Although few government initiatives address the needs of single-parent families specifically, those which are used frequently by these families tend to contribute to their low economic status, rather than remedy it.

The Manitoba Advisory Council on the Status of Women believes that to truly support single-parent families, and to ensure that they have a decent quality of life, it is essential that the Manitoba Government undertake a wholesale restructuring of income security and

related programs.

RECOMMENDATION: THAT the Manitoba Government develop a comprehensive economic strategy which will ensure that all single-parent families are able to enjoy an adequate standard of living and to participate fully in community life.

The notion of wholesale change is not a new one, nor is it entirely removed from the Canadian context. The Ontario Government, for example, recently commissioned a review team, *Transitions*, better known as the Thomson Report, which recommended fundamental changes to the existing social assistance system. The Ontario Government has since committed an initial \$415 million to implement the first phase of the Thomson Report recommendations.¹

The development of a comprehensive economic strategy is a long-term goal based on a vision of fairness, shared responsibility and personal dignity. Because the high incidence of poverty experienced by single-parent families is a most pressing concern, and one that demands immediate attention, the Advisory Council makes a series of short-term, specific recommendations.

I. INCOME SECURITY

i) INCOME MAINTENANCE

Income maintenance programs must provide single-parent families with assistance that is adequate to meet their basic needs for shelter, food, clothing, and personal and health care. It is therefore recommended that:

- * standard social allowances rates, and "special needs" allocations, be substantially increased;
- * shelter allowances be increased to meet actual shelter costs.

In addition to increasing social allowances benefits, revisions to the Social Allowances Program must include measures to eliminate program-generated barriers to training and long-term employment. It is therefore recommended that:

- * high tax-back rates on earned income be eliminated from the Work Incentive Program;
- * a "transition" period be implemented for all Social Allowances programs, whereby benefits are not immediately eliminated but are gradually reduced during the first year that a recipient engages in paid or self-employment;
- * social supports, child care, and travel subsidies be provided to single-parents participating in Social Allowances-sponsored training or employment opportunities;
- * Social Allowances recipients who wish to become self-employed be allowed to participate in the Work Incentive Program, and be allowed to accumulate necessary business-related assets during a business start-up period; and
- * recipients be encouraged to pursue training and employment opportunities in areas of the labour market which provide a living wage.

Although it is essential that financial independence is encouraged in Social Allowances recipients by the elimination of barriers to training and employment opportunities, it is also important to preserve the notion of choice as a basis for these government initiatives, thereby allowing recipients to choose full-time parenting as an alternative to paid work.

ii) Income Supplement

Many single-parents are among Canada's "working poor", and those who are women are often ghettoized in low-paying sectors of the labour market. It is therefore essential that the Manitoba Government make revisions to the Child Related Income Support Program (CRISP). It is recommended that:

- * the supplement provided through CRISP be increased substantially;

- * the income eligibility level of CRISP be increased to at least approximate the current Statistics Canada low income cut-offs.

It is also essential that Manitoba's labour and related laws be improved and expanded to support working single-parents. It is recommended that:

- * the provincial minimum wage be increased;
- * incentives be offered to Manitoba businesses which are willing to provide working parents with flexible work hours, opportunities for job sharing and other related measures such as sick leave to cover child-related illness as well as personal illness;
- * pay equity and affirmative action be made priorities by the Manitoba Government.

II. SHELTER PROGRAMS

High shelter costs, housing conditions and availability of accommodations are serious concerns for single-parent families. Their needs must therefore be identified as priorities in shelter assistance and rental supplement programs. It is recommended that:

- * the number of subsidized housing units for family renters be increased;
- * the supplement provided through Shelter Assistance for Family Renters (SAFFR) be increased substantially;
- * the SAFFR income eligibility level be increased to at least approximate current Statistics Canada low income cut-offs;
- * SAFFR be indexed to the cost of living.

III. CHILD CARE

It is essential that child care programs be expanded and enhanced to ensure that such care is available to single-parents and other parents who need it. It is recommended that:

- * existing child care programs be expanded so that more child care spaces are made available to Manitoba parents;
- * child care programs be enhanced so that they are able to offer part-time care, respite care, and care which is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week;
- * child care programs must also be enhanced to accommodate disabled children, and children who may be temporarily ill;
- * new child care programs designed specifically for and by parents from different cultures should also be established.

IV. MAINTENANCE AND CHILD SUPPORT

Inadequate maintenance payments are a major factor contributing to the poverty of single-parent women and their children. This and related issues are reviewed in the Advisory Council's 1985 publication, "The Economic Realities of Women Under the Manitoba Family Maintenance Act." For purposes of this review, it is important to reiterate the following two recommendations contained in the report which focus on the determination of maintenance awards. It is therefore recommended that:

- * s. 5(1)(c) of the Manitoba Family Maintenance Act be amended to provide that in determining maintenance, the court consider the standard of living of both family units with a view to ensuring that such standards are similar for both spouses after separation;
- * the definition of "financially independent", as contained in s.5 (1)(g) of the Manitoba Family Maintenance Act, be seen to be achieved only when a spouse can maintain a standard of living similar to that of her estranged spouse.

V. EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Ensuring access to education and training opportunities is a key strategy in improving the economic status of single-parent families. In order to address the specific needs of single-

parents, it is recommended that:

- * there be more educational initiatives modelled on the ACCESS Programs which provide personal, financial and academic supports;
- * greater flexibility be built into programs and funding guidelines to allow single-parents to participate in educational and training programs at an appropriate pace;
- * resources to school divisions and community agencies be increased in order to provide more comprehensive and accessible services for adolescent mothers;
- * single-parents be invited to join with educational authorities in designing and creating adult educational models that respect the multiple role demands experienced by single-parents;
- * that both levels of government strengthen their historic commitment to educational equity by ensuring ongoing funding of the post-secondary ACCESS Programs; and
- * that the provincial government strongly urge the federal government to reinstate funding for the ACCESS programs.

COORDINATION AND ACCESS

Many programs and services which support single-parent families and enhance the quality of their lives have been implemented by the Government of Manitoba. There is, however, no provincial strategy to co-ordinate programs, or to ensure access to all those in need.

RECOMMENDATION: THAT the Government of Manitoba establish a Co-ordinating Office for Single-Parent Families within the Department of Family Services.

A Co-ordinating Office for Single-Parent Families must be equipped to provide information and referral services, as well as advocacy services. By centralizing information and referral resources, this office would eliminate the frustrations of many single-parents by reducing the multiplicity of "entry-points" to the system. By filling out an initial application form through the Co-ordinating Office, the number of such forms required for a range of provincial programs and services would be reduced, as would the costs associated with administering many of these programs.

Information dissemination and outreach strategies must be developed for Manitoba's different linguistic and cultural communities, and must be implemented in northern and rural communities, to ensure that all single-parent families have access to the services of the Co-ordinating Office.

Because of the rapidly increasing numbers of aboriginal single-parent families, it is essential that the Manitoba Government work with aboriginal organizations to ensure that government programs and services already in place are culturally sensitive. It is also imperative that the government support aboriginal organizations in establishing specific programs and services for aboriginal single-parent families.

AWARENESS AND ATTITUDINAL CHANGE: CONSULTATION

It is imperative that the single-parent family in Manitoba be acknowledged and validated as a positive family structure. Individuals who work in "front-line" positions with family members, such as teachers, day care workers, social workers, health care personnel, and lawyers, must be made aware of the severity of conditions experienced by many single-parent families. Schools, training institutions, recreational programs and employers, must also be conscious of the limited resources available in many single-parent families and respond sensitively.

RECOMMENDATION: THAT the Government of Manitoba work with other key sectors within the province to acknowledge the increasing numbers of single-parent families, to promote awareness of the issues associated with single-parenthood and to foster a sensitivity among all residents of Manitoba regarding the realities of life for single-parent families.

To ensure that all concerns are addressed, single-parents themselves must be invited to participate in the design and development of services for single-parent families.

Aboriginal peoples, immigrant and refugee groups must be involved as key consultants in order to create culturally-appropriate and accessible services for all residents of Manitoba.

APPENDIX 1

TABLE 1

SINGLE-PARENT FAMILIES IN MANITOBA AND WINNIPEG

MANITOBA

	1976		1986	
	#	%	#	%
Female-headed	20,665	83.6	27,960	82.7
Male-headed	4,070	16.4	5,840	17.2
TOTAL	24,730	100.0	33,800	100.0
Percentage Change 1976-1986				+36.7

WINNIPEG

	1976		1986	
	#	%	#	%
Female-headed	13,780	86.7	19,145	85.1
Male-headed	2,110	13.2	3,360	14.9
TOTAL	15,890	100.0	22,505	100.0
Percentage Change 1976-1986				+41.6

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